

**Item 25-0021: Request to accept Non-State Grant Award of \$274,000 and approve the following 2025 Budget Amendment: Facilities Capital Projects Misc State Aids +\$274,000 Library Project +\$274,000**

Common Council

Wed, Feb 05, 2025 7:00PM

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 19:48

All right, moving on to the item from Finance Committee. This is item 25-0021, request to accept non-state grant award of \$274,000 and approve the following budget amendment which is included in the materials. We have a motion and a second to approve. Open the floor for discussion. Alder Hartzheim.

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13)** 20:23

Thank you, Chair. I am going to assume that most of you watch the finance committee or were attending—in attendance at the Finance Committee meeting, so you understand my qualms with this particular item. It is not that I do not want to accept this grant. It is that I feel that the way that this action item is presented to us simply adds to the cost of the library, or the ability to spend on the library. And I understand that the part that the taxpayers have paid for this particular project is already in this library project budget and that we can't exactly just write checks to all our constituents and refund them the \$274,000 that we've gotten in this grant. Yet I still feel as though this just is an open invitation for folks to say, "Well, now you're just going to spend 274,000 more dollars on the library," And that—that hurts me. It makes me very uncomfortable. Let's put it that way.

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13)** 21:40

I had a comment from one of my constituents saying "It's like saying a person is \$400,000 in debt to their relatives, and that person finds \$274 and instead of paying off debt to the family, they decide to start looking for snow cone machines, designer sunglasses or a badminton set." That's the interpretation that a lot of our constituents have in regards to something like this.

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13)** 22:08

So, in order to try to combat that, I would like to offer an amendment please. I would like to include as verbiage to this particular item "after final invoices are paid, any excess of funding in the library project budget category will be applied to future capital projects to reduce—to reduce the financial burden for local taxpayers." I was giving, given that amendment verbiage after long discussions with Director Ohman.

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 22:44

So, we have a motion to amend. Is there a second? All right, there is a second on the motion to amend. So, we'll open discussion on the amendment. Alder Van Zeeland.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5)** 23:00

Thank you, Chair. Could we hear from Director Gazza on his take on this amendment?

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 23:07

Director Gaza. Go ahead.

**Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities)** 23:16

Yes, I can speak to the project itself. We continue to work on the project, continue to continue to stay within budg—budget. I'd remind the council that the project did have a two and a half percent contingency, which is

extremely small for a project of this size. So, the project is doing really well. We're closing out the project, getting close to closing out the project, and don't have no on it—on any anticipated expenses. But again, this grant was something that I didn't—wasn't part of going after. Director Rortvedt and I believe the Friends—would it be the Friends or the Friends group—were instrumental in acquiring that. And I think that's an important piece of this, that it is specific to the library. And so I don't know what the ramifications of that are, but I do believe it's specific to the library. So, if it was being asked to spend—be spent on something else that might have some problems getting the money if it's not being used specifically for the library, because that was the criteria that it was acquired on.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 24:37**

Yeah, I think it'd be helpful, Alder van Zeeland, for additional context about the grant itself and the role that the Friends of the Public Library played in in securing that grant. So, Director Rortvedt if you please.

**Executive Director Colleen Rortvedt (Library) 24:51**

Sure, well, the grant was something that was submitted over a year ago, and while we had asked for a million, like every other project that was awarded in this grant process, we were awarded less than we had asked. This is a reimbursement for funds expended. So, you submit transactions for reimbursement, and then the state would pay for reimbursement.

**Executive Director Colleen Rortvedt (Library) 25:25**

The project itself was specifically based on a renovation to expand the library space and enhance its role as a community and cultural hub, providing modernized facilities to meet the evolving needs of the Appleton community. So, I'm not sure if you had other questions, but—

**Mayor Jake Woodford 25:47**

Thank you.

**Executive Director Colleen Rortvedt (Library) 25:47**

—hopefully that helps.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 25:48**

Alder van Zeeland.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 25:50**

If I could just follow up, then. Is it the intent of the project managers to raise—to use these funds above and beyond what we've already budgeted for the library project?

**Mayor Jake Woodford 26:02**

No.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 26:04**

Thank you.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 26:06**

Further discussion on the amendment. Right, we have a motion and a second to amend. Oh, I'm sorry I didn't see you. Oh, they're not coming up. Well. Oh. Oh, there you are. Okay. I'm sorry, folks. All right, here we go. Alder Fenton.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 26:32**

Thank you, Your Honor. Perhaps this is a rhetorical question. I'm—so I would rhetorically direct it to either Director Gazza or Director Rortvedt. Had the Friends raised \$14 million of—meaning above their goal of \$12 million—would we expect an amendment or a proposal to reimburse that money to the taxpayers? We got a grant here that is fundraising for the library towards our expenses and the—again, the Friends of the Library had a \$12 million budget. And the—if they had raised \$14 million my question would be, would we not be allowed to spend that on the library?

**Mayor Jake Woodford 27:37**

I can take that. The Friends of the public library made a \$12 million commitment to the project for capital related to the building project. So, I'm of the opinion that if the campaign raised more than the target total, it would be at the discretion of the Friends of the public library. So long as they've met their commitment to the city the additional funds are not—they're not city funds. They're the funds of the Friends of the Public Library. So, it would be at their discretion as to how they would allocate those funds, if they would allocate those funds.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 28:17**

Thank you.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 28:19**

Alder Firkus.

**Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 28:23**

Thank you, Chair. When we budget for a project and we borrow for a project, say, any project, not just this, but we budget a million, we borrow a million, project comes in and we end up spending, you know, \$950,000, we don't just spend \$50,000 more on a project—correct? That usually ends up either being carried over into other projects so we don't to borrow that \$50,000 for it or something like that. If a new project were to come up that that could go towards that would still have to go through normal process—correct?

**Mayor Jake Woodford 28:55**

Correct.

**Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 28:56**

And the library project is not different from any other project in this capacity. Correct?

**Mayor Jake Woodford 29:01**

Correct.

**Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 29:03**

Sometimes I think that when we have these kind of discussions where we kind of entertain this, we kind of help feed that perception that that's not what happens. I'm not going to vote for this amendment because this project isn't any different from any other project we've ever approved that has come in under budget or at budget.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 29:23**

Alder Wolff.

**Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 29:25**

Call the question.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 29:29**

All right. Motion has been made to call the question. Is there a second? There are two speakers in the queue. We have a motion and a second to call the question. Two speakers in the queue. All those in favor of calling the question, please signify by saying, aye.

**Group of Alderpersons 29:41**

Aye.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 29:42**

Those opposed?

**Other Group of Alderpersons 29:44**

Nay.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 29:47**

I'm gonna, I'm gonna call that. I'm gonna call for division, because I can't make a determination. So, we'll handle this still with a with a show of hands. So, all those in favor of calling the question please raise your hand. Eight. All right, the ayes have it. The question has been called. This is on the amendment. Please cast your votes. That motion fails three to 11. We're back to the main motion. Further discussion. Alder Doran.

**Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 30:38**

Thank you. I guess I'm not sure if my question is still pertinent. I'm a little, I guess, frustrated at the sort of pettiness sometimes about calling questions when there are people in the queue. My question really just related—I was asking for an explanation of what the amendment actually meant. I wasn't entirely clear. So, I was hoping for an explanation from the Finance Director just to help understand how I might have voted on that. I guess it doesn't matter anymore, so I guess I'll withdraw.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 31:09**

Okay.

**Alderperson Chad Doran (District 15) 31:10**

Thank you.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 31:11**

Further discussion. All right, seeing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Motion passes 12 to two. Item has been approved.